



# SIERRA REGIONAL SKI FOR LIGHT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023.

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## SRSFL NEWSLETTER, 2023 WHO WE ARE

Sierra Regional Ski For Light (SRSFL) is an all-volunteer, nonprofit cross-country ski program for blind and visually impaired children and adults. Donations are tax-exempt under section (501) (c)(3) of the IRS code. The program provides blind and visually impaired individuals with the opportunity to challenge themselves physically and mentally, learn new skills and to enjoy good health, all by being involved in a winter cross- country ski and a summer program, including hiking and water activities. This newsletter is published annually to provide information about the people and activities of SRSFL.

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME MESSAGE

by

**Michelle Godwin, Diamon Springs, CA**

Greetings SRSFL participants, past participants, donors and volunteers! This year has been an interesting one for Sierra Regional Ski for Light. This is a special year as we enjoyed winter events for the first time since 2020. However, we only got in a 1-day event as we had too much snow and yet another storm to host the 3-day event! We are becoming experts in extremes it seems. Members of the board and other volunteers worked hard to make the 1-day event a super success, as

well as to try to make the 3-day event happen. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked hard on the 1-day and 3-day event. Last June the 3-day hiking event in honor of Monte Rowell was a huge success. And a hard-working



President, Miche Godwin

volunteer committee is working on planning another such event. Please join us for this year's 3-day hiking event in Truckee in August which comes complete with transportation from the Sacramento area. As a new president I owe a huge thanks to all the other board members as well as Victoria Post and Margie Donovan for all the help given this past year. Kathy Masters, Cathy Campbell, Edie Lott, Sharleen Wills, Betsy Rowell and Jean Snuggs have been particularly key in keeping things running for SRSFL this year. Thank you to Edie Lott for your service on the board and all the volunteer work you do for SRSFL.

Elections this year means that we have a new vice-president and we welcome Sue Mangis to this role on the board. This is an exciting time for Sierra Regional Ski for Light. We have new participation, a growing interest in regional outdoor activities and we are looking forward to everyone's contributions to SRSFL. We invite each and every one of you to stay involved with us through our planning meetings, fund-raising and hiking events. Please come to our board meetings as they are a place for all to participate and find out about how to get involved. Whether you are new to SRSFL, new to outdoor winter sports, 6 or 80, there is a spot for your friendship and participation. The board and I wish for each of you to be well in all ways and hope to see you very soon.

## **THE INCREDIBLE WEEKEND 2023**

**By**

**Edie Lott, Truckee, CA**

In February we were able to have a successful Day Trip and much needed Guide Training.



Cindy trains new guides



Guide Duane and Skier Neil

Then the storms started rolling in! It was with sadness that we had to cancel our Three-Day Winter Event. It well planned and going to be well attended.

We were excited, then Mother Nature threw us a curve ball! A huge storm rolled in that weekend. As most of you know this turned out to be one of the biggest snow event winters ever!

While we were heartbroken, after all the work put into this event and the excitement generated among new skiers and guides, we had to err on the side of safety. We are looking forward to a great 2024 Three Day Winter Event!

## **RETURNING TO SRSFL**

**By**

**Sylvia and Rich Holcomb. Sacramento, CA**

Hello there! We warmly said with a smile as we gazed at old friends that we missed through the COVID19 epidemic. Yes, we a referring to guides, volunteers, and returning skiers/hikers. We found we had missed them all. We missed wearing our hiking boots, snow shoes, and skis. And we really missed the fresh crisp mountain air. Rich once again was able to ski with one of his favorite guides Dave Huggins. "My skis gathered a lot of snow and Dave helped scrape off the snow from under my skies.

I was really tired and Dave was very patient in taking me through the course. I can't wait to return again to Donner Cross Country" Sylvia was thrilled to see Pixie once again while renting equipment and visiting with SRSFL folks in the lodge. "I snow-showed with Cathy Campbell. She pointed out beautifully snow dusted trees. I loved hearing birds singing and having snow fall onto my face. And I especially enjoyed feeling snow crunch under my feet!

## **A DAY ON THE SLOPES**

**By**

**Mike Bittner, Rancho Cordova, CA**

After 2 years of no skiing due to Covid, it was nice to get back on the slopes. We went down to Euro Valley and skied the various trails. There was lots of good snow, and then we did a few loops on Lion's Leap after coming out of the valley. All in all, it was a real good day. I'm looking forward to the summer hiking event, and the 2024 ski season.

## **HIKING IN AN ASPEN GROVE**

**BY**

**Karen Schrader, Sacramento, CA**

I'm standing in the middle of a small aspen grove, observing my surroundings with all my senses. The air is so fresh: the scent of pine trees mixed with the sweet smell of some wildflowers. There is a rustling sound all around me as the aspen leaves shimmer in the breeze. It almost sounds like running water, but softer. My guide, Gail, is showing me why the aspen leaves are shimmering; while the aspen leaves are horizontal, their stems are vertical. She tells me that it's quite possible that this small grove has emerged from only one aspen tree! What a blessing to be paired up with Gail, a botanist, for this hike around the small lake! The weather is perfect, 72 degrees and sunny, and as our trail moves closer to the lake, I can hear small ripples in the water. How peaceful it feels to be here, right in the midst of God's creation! Only a couple more miles to go on this trail, and then it will be time for our picnic lunch with a few other hikers and guides from our SRSFL group. This afternoon we will spend some time on the shore of South Lake Tahoe as we listen to the laughter of the children playing in the cold water, the sputter of motorboats as they pass, and the waves created by these boats and the wind. This morning the lake was peacefully silent, but later this afternoon there will be lots of waves! Besides being encouraged and inspired by God's awesome creation, I also enjoy shopping, so I can't wait to check out the gift shop down the road from the large log cabin at the conference center. I hear they even sell ice cream there! This is my first-time hiking with this group of wonderful people, including fabulous volunteers, and it most likely won't be my last! Besides cross-country ski trips during the winter months, they organize hiking trips, like this one, during the summer. I am thankful to all who made this trip possible: our fearless leaders, Vicki and Betsy, our incredible volunteers, our sponsors, and anyone else not included in one of those groups! Thank you

## **A LOVELY TIME**

**BY**

**Nelly Emerson, Santa Maria, CA**

Betsy, thank you for all you do! Steve and I had a lovely time. We enjoyed the venues. If we go to Tahoe Donner for another hiking weekend, I would



Hiker Nelly and Friend

enjoy spending more time at the state park so I can walk a further distance. I also really liked hiking at the ski area. The Sunday trip to Elizabeth Town had amazing vistas which were described beautifully by Patty Chin. Her description of the flowers and trees created a beautiful picture in my mind. I have lost most of my color vision in the past three years. I will definitely plan to come for the snow trip. I already recruited Charlene from San Diego and encouraged her to come. Be well! Sending hugs!

## **A FANTASTIC WEEKEND**

**By**

**Joni Patchi, Sacramento, CA**

I had a fantastic weekend with a wonderful group of people. By the end of our time together, I felt so relaxed and I felt like a new person again, ready to take on all kinds of challenges. Thanks so much for that. I would love to be a part of this organization and will pitch in and help where I am needed. Thanks for everything. Have fun!

## **A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE**

**By**

**Tony Duenas and Diana, Los Angels, CA**

A week after my return back home from our outing, I wanted to put my thoughts on paper. First, I wanted to thank Vita and Frank for their generosity for making this trip possible for me this year. What a great way to meet Frank and Harmony. I can't wait for the chance to meet Vita and thank her in person.

I didn't know what to expect on this outing, but I definitely did not expect what I got. SRSFL far surpassed all my expectations. The attention to detail by everyone at SRSFL on our behalf was very touching. From the time I was picked up in Sacramento to the time I was dropped off back at the Amtrak station in Sacramento, it was such a pleasant experience. The bus transportation that took us everywhere, the hotels that we stayed at, the food both at breakfast and dinner, all were just great. Yet, the highlight for me was definitely the caliber of guides that I had every single day with SRSFL. Starting on my first day with Tom and Patty. Wow, I could not have asked for a better introduction to an amazing weekend than with Tom and Patty. They knew the history of the place where we were at, they had such great stories and thanks to Patty, I now know what to do with "mule's ear". The hike that

first day was perfect. I felt so many flowers, trees and plants along the way. I'm having a hard time to determine who had more fun on this trip, me or Diana, my guide dog. Oh yes, my girl had a fantastic time and it all started with Tom and Patty. We finished our hike a little faster than we had anticipated, so they drove me and Diana for a little hike at Donner Lake. I would like to say that Diana was working the whole time but I would be lying. This girl jumped in the lake, which was so cold, at least for me, and had the time of her life. At least until the next day, but that's a little later on. I can't thank both Tom and Patty for such a wonderful time on my first day.

Our second day started with rain. Heavy at times but for the most part light but continuous throughout the day. This didn't stop my two guides for our hike on the 2nd day. Michael and Lobo were my guides for the hike up to Hawk's Peak. Holy cow that was fun! Diana was whining because she wanted to go faster, she wanted to run. Michael finally suggested that maybe I should let her loose. I was afraid to let her loose, I wasn't sure how it would go but I relented because she really wanted to run. As soon as I let her go, she became a new dog. She really must have walked double of what we did because she would run ahead, behind, to the left and to the right. This happened the whole hike. As soon as I called her name, she would run up next to me. So yes, this was the best day of her life, at least till the next day. I can't say enough about how much fun I had hiking up to Hawk's Peak. There were times when the rain was quite strong, then it would lighten up and we even had a little sun for a few seconds. We finally reached the top and the winds were so strong that I knew both Michael and myself would fly off if we were not low to the ground. Wow, those winds were scary and strong. We turned back at the peak and headed back down for a much-needed lunch at the lodge at the bottom. The cup of coffee I had never tasted so good. Thanks Michael and Lobo for such an amazing 2<sup>nd</sup> day for both Diana and I. Day three, our last day so I really wanted to make it count. I was very lucky to have Lobo again as my guide. For the last hike, Lobo wanted to take me up to Castle's Peak. This was for sure the highest of the places that we had been so far. Both Diana and I were up for the challenge. Well, Diana was up for the challenge. I just tried as best I could to keep up with her, unsuccessfully I might add. What an amazing Monday hike with Lobo. His wit and humor make the hike, which was tough, so much fun. I truly hope I made a friend for life with Lobo. He is one tough hiker. We climbed as much as we could till the snow just made us turn back. This city boy was not prepared for so much snow. Yes, this was for sure Diana's best day yet. The snow did not bother her in the least. She was drinking from streams, going

in and out of the freezing water like nothing. She had such a great time. When we finally made it back down, Lobo suggested that we walk the Legacy trail, which is where we were meeting up with the rest of the group. We drove to where we were meeting everyone for a bit more walking, and little bit more swimming for Diana. Our trip was coming to an end. It was capped off with a really cool history lesson about the Donner party that was very informative and I'll never forget. A special thanks to Lobo's niece, I can't remember her name because I'm not that smart, yet I'm truly grateful that she was there. She took some awesome pictures on our hike the last day that I was able to share with my friends and family. She was amazing. Betsy, I can't say enough what a fantastic time both Diana and I had with SRSFL. This was a great initiation for me with this great organization. I have always wanted to go skiing but was very apprehensive, ok, I'm scared. Yet, after meeting everyone at SRSFL, I feel that it's my time! The guides that SRSFL has had made me finally take the plunge and if possible, I'm definitely meeting up with this amazing group for some skiing in the future.

Betsy, please thank everyone who has worked so hard in making this weekend so amazing for all of us. I know that there was so much work on a daily basis that we did not see. So much work behind the scenes goes unnoticed but we do know that it's because of all their work that this weekend was such a success. I'm truly grateful and hope to see everyone on the ski slopes next year.

## **IN MEMORY**

**By**

**Edie Lott, Truckee, CA**

Sierra Regional Ski For Light mourns the recent loss of three pillars of our program, while our program was stalled because of the pandemic. We lost Tom Gorin, beloved and competent guide, and Monte Rowell, one of our founders and a longtime guide. Then last October, we lost another great guide when, elite runner, Sharon Fong died in a tragic accident.



Guide Sharon, Skier Mike, Guide Tom

In early 2021 Tom Gorin lost his fight with cancer and left us way too soon! He was a great guide and board member at Sierra Regional Ski For Light. Over the past few years, he put in countless hours ranging for our dinners during event.

Three-Day Events. He was always willing to guide anyone I would ask him to. He was warm, positive and funny. Ski For Light will not be the same without him.

Monte Rowell died peacefully on the morning of January 13, 2022, at the wonderful age of 95. Monte was one of the four cornerstones of SRSFL, contributing so much more to its growth than most of us could possibly know. Whatever SRSFL needed, he was there — driving, guiding, taking pictures, serving as Board treasurer, proofreading, being Betsy's sounding board, making coffee for all the overnight folks who came up on the train for SRSFL events and so much more. Though quiet and unassuming, he was quite the powerhouse behind the scene, and had a way of saying what needed to be said at just the moment.



Monte Rowell

Sharon Fong, a longtime accomplished guide for Sierra Regional Ski For Light, suffered a tragic accident and passed away in the early afternoon of October 7, 2022, a week before her 65th birthday. She was a registered organ donor and was able to save the lives of two other people with her passing. She was an amazing partner, mother, grandmother and ski guide. We will miss her tremendously. Throughout her life she was an accomplished athlete, world traveler, and avid outdoor enthusiast. Sharon's passing will be a huge loss for Ski For Light and an almost unbearable one for her family. We deeply miss all three of these wonderful additions to the Sierra Regional Ski For Light Program! They are irreplaceable.

## **FUND-RAISING EFFORTS**

Fund-raising is one of the most vital elements to ensure SRSFL's future. Anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated. We are seeking individual and group donations as well as grants. 100 percent of the money raised goes directly into the program for transportation, scholarships and other expenses, and to keep the cost down for all our participants. If you have questions, ideas and/or suggestions on fund-raising or can refer us to community organizations or other helpful connections, please contact one of



our board members to coordinate a donation or a presentation to a group. Thank you in advance for your help. SRSFL would like to take this opportunity to thank the many donors from the past year for their support of our cross-country ski/snowshoe program and summer outings.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023-2024**

\*Note: Please go to our web-site for applications and more information:  
<https://srsfl.org/>

SRSFL Hiking Weekend  
August 26-28, 2023! Join us!

Winter 2024 1-day events: TBA  
2024 3-day event: TBA  
Guide training: TBA

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

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